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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [NI](#)

SUBJECT: NIGERIA: TWO NORTHERNERS REFLECT THE DISENCHANTED
VIEWS OF MANY

Classified By: Political Counselor Walter N.S. Pflaumer for reasons 1.4
(b) and (d)

11. (C) Visiting State Department Nigeria Desk Officer traveled with PolOff and PolSpecialist to Kano, Zaria, and Kaduna on May 10-13, and met with a broad spectrum of Northern academics, politicians, and civil society leaders. Although several of these contacts touted "free and fair elections" as a beacon for reform and governance efforts, it became apparent that despite their use of this catch phrase, many Northerners have taken on a defeatist perspective, and have lost the will to demand more from their government.

12. (C) Professor Ango Abdullahi, a founding member of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) and former Special Advisor on Food Security to former President Olusegun Obasanjo, said that development of Nigeria is only possible if people are educated, sensitized, and mobilized. He suggested that "Nigerians have a fatalistic view; they are so spiritually inclined that they think prayer is their only option." Abdullahi lamented Nigeria's current state of political leadership saying, "we had high hopes, but are disappointed. Progress, if the word progress must be used, has been unsatisfactory." He expressed this dismay despite the fact that he has been personally friends with Obasanjo and Yar'Adua over the years (though he seemed to doubt that either friendship remains intact, given his critical stances on both their governments).

13. (C) Turning to electoral reform, Abdullahi commented that "another rigging could lead us to anywhere," but held onto international support as a sliver of hope, saying: "It is not too late to mobilize" before the 2011 elections and that "other pressures can really help us." Abdullahi urged the USG to support civil society groups and to exert pressure on the GON to commit to electoral reform and the fight against corruption. He applauded the USG for declining Nigeria's recent request for a State visit, and maintained that continued pressure from the USG would strengthen internal support for democratic reform.

14. (C) In a separate meeting, Mustapha Ismail, Director of the Centre for Human Rights in Islam, adopted a similar tone, saying that Nigerians are "disenchanted" with their government. He said that there will be a clamor for Shari'a law each time the constitution is amended because Nigerians have not seen any improvements in their lives as a result of the government.

15. (C) Comment: Conversations with many interlocutors during

this recent trip had a similar despondent tone. Those within the PDP lamented the misuse of power by leaders in their party, and the lack of free and fair elections. Opposition party spokesmen seem to have determined that their efforts are futile, and have adopted an apathetic attitude toward the 2011 elections. Members of both the ruling party and the opposition often said that at least some degree of international involvement is necessary to improve Nigeria's democracy. Hence, many Northern Nigerians seem simply to be waiting for the international community to rescue their country from its governance plight. End Comment.

14. (U) This cable was coordinated with Consulate Lagos.
SANDERS